



Postwar Germany and the Growth of Democracy

A Resource Guide

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Postwar Germany and the Growth of Democracy

A Resource Guide

Developed by

Office of Secondary Instruction
Virginia Department of Education

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Introduction

Germany is a country in transition. The end of the Second World War brought with it the rebirth of democracy in a country that has for centuries enjoyed a proud tradition of self-determination. The termination of the Cold War as symbolized by the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the resulting reunification of East and West Germany presented both unique opportunities and challenges for economic, social, and political growth in that country. As a result of that growth, Germany has established itself as a major player in world affairs.

This document has been developed to help teachers and students understand how Germany's rise as a strong democratic republic after World War II has led to that country's rebirth as a major economic power in Europe. The lessons contained in this publication will enable teachers and students to explore Germany's social, political, and economic experiences since 1945. Studying Germany's history and literature can provide students with a foundation for understanding the relationship between past and present. Such knowledge will equip students to deal with social, political, and economic issues that might arise in our own country.

The lessons in this document will also help students to understand chronological thinking, the connection between causes and effects, and the relationship between continuity and change. Studying the history and literature of postwar Germany will enable students to see how the German people have grappled with the fundamental questions of truth, justice, and personal responsibility. They will also more fully understand that ideas have real consequences and realize that events are shaped both by ideas and the actions of individuals.

In 1995, the Virginia Board of Education took an important step to raise the expectations for all students in Virginia's public schools by adopting new Standards of Learning (SOL). The new standards set reasonable targets and expectations for what teachers need to teach and students need to learn. The lessons contained in this publication provide useful instructional approaches for teaching Virginia's History and English SOL.

Contents

Unit I — The First Postwar Years: Reconstruction and Economic Development after World War II

Introduction	1
Lessons	14
Resources.....	31

Unit II — Coming to Terms with the Past: Lessons from the Holocaust

Introduction	47
Lessons	55
Resources.....	71

Unit III — The Nature of Constitutions: Germany and the United States

Introduction	159
Lessons	174
Resources.....	187

Unit IV — Germany, Europe, and the United States after 1949

Introduction	197
Lessons	211
Resources.....	218

Unit V — Relations between East Germany and West Germany from 1949 to Reunification and the End of the Cold War

Introduction	229
Lessons	240
Resources.....	251

Unit VI — The Challenge of Reunification, European Integration, and Globalization

Introduction	275
Lessons	289
Resources.....	307